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Governability, participation and social aspects of planning

*Yehezkel Dror**

In a series of 18 propositions, the author discusses what, in his judgement, are the problems affecting planning and what decisions will have to be taken in order to deal with them. In his view, planning is an important dimension of the capacity to govern and, hence, its improvement can only be attained within the context of a general improvement in the capacity to govern. To this end, the author proposes a selective and radical strategy for achieving major advances in a few crucial components of the decision-making process.

Proposals made with a view to increasing the influence of planning in bringing about these advances include educating political élites to understand the planning process more fully and integrating planning into decision-making. In addition, planning must respond to two contradictory demands: participation in day-to-day decision-making, on the one hand, and the formulation and assessment of long-term global strategies, on the other. In order to cope with these conflicting requirements, both the structure and the techniques of planning will have to be adapted, and the author makes a number of suggestions in this regard.

Other important propositions put forward in this article relate, *inter alia*, to: the author's concept of planning as "policy gambling" aimed at dealing with the uncertainty and turbulence of present circumstances; the need to incorporate social interests into semi-corporate structures; the creation of special organizations for the express purpose of carrying out development strategies for overcoming bureaucratic inertia; and the "visionary leadership" which should be a feature of planning.

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Eighteen main propositions

Proposition 1:

Planning is a main facet of the "capacity to govern", the term "governability" being misleading in many respects

The term "governability", while quite fashionable, is very misleading in many respects. It implies that the present difficulties of governments result from societies and problems having become "ungovernable", the implication therefore being that it is up to societies and other facets of reality to become "governable". While it is true that many societal and other features pose serious challenges to governments, the variable which should be considered is the "capacity to govern", which may include efforts to make society more governable, but which puts the onus where it belongs. It is up to governments to improve and to develop capacities which enable them to fulfill their tasks under more demanding conditions.

"Planning" is a multi-sense term. Nevertheless, however, it may be defined for different purposes and in various spheres of discourse, "planning" implies long-range views, interrelated sets of decisions and actions and a high quality of professional reasoning. It should be added that the idea of planning is not that of *dirigisme*, since different mixes of State and market roles serve as options for "planning", permitting—and often requiring—various forms and modes of planning.

Correctly understood, the various forms and modes of planning constitute an important dimension of the capacity to govern. This is all the more so when the tasks faced by a society require sustained and long-range efforts, as is the case with development aspirations. In respect to development and to the roles of the State in that regard, planning is essential, *inter alia*, to counterbalance political propensities to prefer a short-term view. Similarly, the professional reasoning which goes into planning is important in supplying adequate elements of "development rationality". Therefore, one of the recommended frameworks for a consideration of planning within the context of the subject under

discussion here is *planning as an essential dimension of the capacity to govern in general*

and of "development capacities" in the face of adverse conditions, in particular.

Proposition 2:

The improvement of planning must take place as part of an effort to upgrade the "central mind" of government as a whole, based on a "selective-radicalism" strategy for retrofitting the State

The metaphoric concept of the "central mind of government", which covers the main central government decision-making cluster, is especially pertinent to planning. To be effective, planning must influence the main decision-making and decision-implementation processes. This influence on decision-making can take a variety of forms, ranging from the educating of top decision-makers and the public in general as well as the reshaping of their cognitive maps and attribution theories, to the direct transformation of planning recommendations into authoritative "command decisions". Nonetheless, all forms of influence by planning depend on interaction with the main decision-making and decision-implementation centres and staffs. Therefore, planning must be viewed within the context of policy-making and policy-implementing systems as a whole; thus, success in augmenting the usefulness of planning will depend, *inter alia*, on the introduction of suitable changes in other system components and in the systems as a whole which will make them more receptive to planning inputs.

Hence the proposition that the improvement of planning should take place as part of an improvement of the central mind of government as a whole. It follows that issues relating to the upgrading of planning must be considered within the context of the broader issues of the retrofitting of governance in general and of central policy-making and policy-implementing systems in particular; otherwise, it will be impossible to cope with the difficulties subsumed under the term "ungovernability".

One important aspect is the idea of a selectively radical reform strategy that goes beyond incremental improvements, which usually are quite worthless, and that rejects presumptions of transforming the entire machinery of government, which is usually impossible and often

unnecessary. Instead, a selectively radical reform strategy focuses on the radical improvement of a few critical components, with a number of such improvements being combined in a modular cluster so as to have a significant impact on the performance of the system as a whole with the aid of a limited, and therefore more feasible, set of reforms.

The selective-radicalism reform strategy relates to the upgrading of planning in two main ways: first, if our starting point were the upgrading of the central mind of government, this route too would bring us to the necessity of improving planning, because planning is an essential mode for the formulation of development policies. This is important because it justifies efforts to improve planning not only from an internal view of planning, which axiomatically regards it as important, but also from an external view of planning, which assigns it importance because of the essential functions it fulfils as regards development capacity as a whole.

Second, the selective-radicalism reform strategy poses the question of what is the minimum set of interdependent improvements which will be essential for upgrading planning. As indicated above, improving planning, by itself, may be useless and even counterproductive unless the central mind of government is willing and able to utilize planning inputs correctly. Therefore, some concomitant changes in other components of the central mind of government are needed, in addition to improvements in planning activity itself. However, when the goal is to improve planning, the changes in other dimensions of the central mind of government relating to it should be kept to an essential minimum so as to ensure the feasibility of this task.

Within such an approach, the components of the central mind of government which must be upgraded in order to improve planning

include, for instance, the qualifications of political decision-makers, modes of decision-making management, policy-analysis units serving the top decision-makers and the interfaces between planning and crisis management. The following propositions elaborate upon some of the needs which are integral to the upgrading of planning within the perspectives of the capacity to govern and the capacity to engage in accelerated development.

Broader issues of planning and the capacity to govern, which are often critical, go beyond the scope of this discussion. The elementary needs of political stability and the containment of social

violence are taken up in the examination of proposition 18; some relevant issues are discussed in relation to other propositions as well. Useful planning, however, depends on some essential aspects of the capacity to govern such as adequate governmental power and a wide-ranging societal consensus.

Satisfying such requisites must receive priority over the upgrading of planning; otherwise the latter is irrelevant. Accordingly, in a number of countries the upgrading of planning should be taken up within a broader approach to the "reform of the State", which should be the first priority.

Proposition 3:

Much attention and effort should be directed towards upgrading policy élites, including, politicians

The interrelations between the improvement of planning and the upgrading of policy élites, including politicians, poses crucial issues. These are hard to deal with because of their unconventional nature and the taboos surrounding them. To put the matter briefly: one main way for planning to exert influence is for it to fulfil didactic functions in respect of policy élites, including politicians, on the one hand, and the public at large, on the other. Furthermore, in order for planning to affect reality for the better, policy élites, including top-level politicians, must be "planning-friendly" in their policy behaviour (as distinct from symbolic declarations) and have at least some "planning sophistication" as part of their intellectual equipment.

Therefore, the "education" of policy élites, and especially top decision-makers, should be regarded as one of the main tasks of planning. This has many operational implications, such as the need for "planning briefing units" which can present complex issues and multiple options in ways comprehensible to politicians, thus indirectly "educating" them.

A different and more demanding conclusion is that new ways of upgrading the qualifications

of policy élites need to be devised. This is an important and unconventional requirement, which needs operationalization to clarify its implications and feasibility. Accordingly, the next proposition presents a concrete proposal to set up schools of national policy. It should be noted that there is no contradiction whatsoever between correct democratic theory and efforts to upgrade the quality of policy élites, including politicians. Indeed, in many developing countries intensive efforts to improve policy élites are essential, ranging from ways of motivating bright young persons to move into politics and policy-related activities, up to adjustments of electoral procedures to improve the quality of successful candidates. Within the limited scope of this article, the only proposal that will be put forward in this respect is the establishment of national policy schools, which are particularly pertinent to planning and relatively more feasible as well as faster in producing results than other approaches. However, the need for a broader approach to upgrading policy élites as an essential factor in development should be kept in mind.

*Proposition 4:
National policy schools should be set up as an integral
part of the effort to upgrade planning*

The idea of national policy schools is simple, although implementation is difficult. Selected groups of various policy-makers and policy-influencers should spend a period of four to six weeks working together, full time, on a deep analysis of major national policy issues, with professional inputs to be provided by experts. Participants should include a mixture of politicians, civil servants, planners and other policy professionals, military officers, trade-union and employer-organization leaders, mass media commentators, etc. Products of the proposed national policy schools include the upgrading of participants' knowledge, as well as greater consensus.

The subjects to be dealt with at the national policy schools would overlap the main planning concerns; the methods to be presented would relate to advanced planning methodology. Conclusions from projects undertaken at the schools could serve as inputs for planning.

Details of structure, staffing, location and content of the national policy schools would depend on particular country situations. In principle, however, it is the author's view that such schools are essential in many countries in order to build up the political culture infrastructure which is basic to planning, as well as to high-quality policy-making and the capacity to govern in general.

*Proposition 5:
Planning must be integrated into current and crisis decision-making*

Unless planning is integrated into current decision-making, its content may become distanced from reality and its impacts on governmental behaviour may approximate zero. This is illustrated in the extreme situation of crisis decision-making. In quite a number of countries, important decisions are taken under conditions of economic and debt-handling crises. Unless planning serves as a sort of a "compass" that will provide guidance in such cases, it will not fulfill its essential role as an important aid to decision-making and its impact on reality will be much reduced. Therefore, planning must be integrated, *inter alia*, into crisis decision-making. This can be done in various ways, such as: the pre-assignment of appropriate roles to senior planning officials in crisis-management teams; the participation of planning officials in designing and running crisis decision-making systems; and the preparation of contingency plans for crisis

scenarios in the planning units and with their participation. First, however, the principle that planning should aid in and influence crisis decision-making must be accepted.

Crisis decision-making is an important but special case of the integration of planning. More regular modes of introducing planning into policy-making include: opportunities for planners to comment on important decisions on the agendas of governments and top decision-makers; the interlocking of the budget process with the planning process, without losing the distinct nature either; suitable procedures for considering planning recommendations at the highest level; etc. The details will need to be adapted to particular circumstances but, in principle, institutionalized modes for integrating planning into current decision-making are a must. Good informal interlocking is also desirable and often essential, but inadequate by itself.

*Proposition 6:**Planning must be detached, at least in part, from "the heat of the moment"*

Three basic causes of the main policy-reasoning weaknesses are: a) ignorance of relevant facts and information; b) inherent difficulties in reasoning on complex situations involving much uncertainty, value conflicts, multiple variables, etc.; and c) "motivated irrationality", i.e., the impact of strong emotions, hopes, feelings, ideologies and similar "hot" variables on reasoning (Pears, 1984; Dror, in preparation).

One of the main functions of planning is to

counteract and overcome these prevalent weaknesses in policy-making. In particular, planning should be "cold", in the sense of a detached handling of issues, however emotionally charged, even while being strongly committed to national goals and development. To meet this requirement, planning must, at least in part, be detached from the "heat" characteristic of the central mind of governments and the corridors of powers.

Proposition 7:

In order to cope with the antimony posed by propositions 5 and 6, a set of "planning" units is essential, ranging from advisory units serving those who govern to think tanks. These units should constitute a network as well as an informal school

The combination of propositions 5 and 6 implies that planning must meet contradictory demands: it must be well integrated into the central mind of government and share in the "heat" of the corridors of powers, while also having the ability to remain aloof, at times, from the system. This paradox cannot be coped with satisfactorily within any one unit or process. Therefore, "planning" must be divided among a range of units, each having a double mission, which add up to an aggregated planning activity providing a good mix of contradictory processes. Therefore, a "planning cluster" rather than a single "planning centre" is needed.

To illustrate the range of components needed in such a planning cluster, let us discuss briefly two of its main elements, which have many contrasting features, but which are both essential and can complement one another: at

one extreme, "planning" requires high-quality advisory units that serve those who govern; at the other extreme, "planning" requires detached policy research and development organizations analogous to think tanks. Various intermediate entities, such as planning units in the main ministries, are also needed, but the advisory units, at one extreme, and the think tanks, at the other, do serve to illustrate the multiple elements essential to a well-performing planning cluster.

A variety of planning units can be integrated within a central ministry of planning, but more is needed, even if the ministry may serve as the centre of the planning cluster. To achieve coherence, the various planning units and planning professionals should constitute a network and an informal school in addition to various formal co-ordination and integration procedures and structures.

Proposition 8:

A planning core, constituting a central "island of excellence" having special features, is essential

The planning cluster requires a core which constitutes an "island of excellence" and which serves as the central "planning brain". When a

distinct planning ministry exists, the core planning unit should be located within it; but it is not identical with the ministry as a whole, which

usually also engages in many other necessary activities, such as detailed project programming and evaluation.

To meet the needs of planning for development, such as methodological sophistication and multi-disciplinary knowledge and perspectives, as will be discussed under some of the following propositions, the core planning "island of excellence" must be of the highest quality and truly interdisciplinary in its composition. Its own

planning processes need constant monitoring and improvement. The quality of the planning core's "island of excellence" is critical in determining the quality and utility of the planning process as a whole and therefore merits a great deal of attention. This is all the more true in view of the author's empirical finding that existing planning ministries usually do not meet the requirements of a central planning core "island of excellence".

Proposition 9:

The main task of central planning, and especially its core unit, is the design and evaluation of global strategies for development

Many planning activities involve efforts to optimize what are actually sinking curves, while what is often needed are novel global development strategies which can transform present declining trends and break out of decaying situations. Therefore, the main task of central planning is the design and evaluation of overall strategies for development.

The substantive contents of global development strategies are outside the scope of this article. Nevertheless, it will be helpful to illustrate some of their facets, which require central planning management and innovative design:

- The proper role of free markets and their limitations;
- Shock strategies versus balanced development approaches;
- Large-scale national projects (yes or no, and which ones?);
- Sectoral priorities and their instruments;
- External economic relations and debt-management strategies;
- Employment and social policies, and their relation to economic policies, as discussed further later on;
- Long-range infrastructure policies;

- Cultural aspects of "development", "productivity", etc., which will be examined;
- Policies designed to encourage innovation;
- Regional markets and other forms of multi-national co-operation.

Experiences in Japan, the newly industrialized nations, France and others show that the design of suitable global development strategies, in principle, is not impossible. However, the challenge is a very considerable one. Therefore planning, as a main mode for successfully meeting the development challenge, must be of very high quality; otherwise it may do much more harm than good. Especially when trends are on a declining curve, as they are now, —planning must concentrate on global development strategies which will permit breakthroughs to be made in the transformation of these trends, rather than on incremental improvisation. This most difficult task, involving —as it sometimes does— intervention in deeply-rooted adverse processes, and bold steps designed to "throw history a curve", underscores the need for core-planning "islands of excellence".

Proposition 10:

Innovativeness and "policy-gambling" are essential planning qualifications

The need for an outstanding quality of planning as a precondition of its usefulness for

development is further illustrated by two additional requirements, namely innovativeness

and "policy-gambling".

Applying a modern philosophy-of-knowledge approach (Munz, 1985), two different phases of development policy-making can be distinguished: a) the invention of new options; and b) the screening of the options and their "confirmation" or "refutation" by reality. The present situation of many developing countries, including those of Latin America and the Caribbean, requires —first of all— the invention and design of new global development strategy options, all the existing ones being of doubtful usefulness at best. Therefore, innovativeness must be a main feature of adequate planning. This is a difficult requirement to meet, however, because it goes beyond conventional professional knowledge and is dependent upon unusual persons and

upon organizational climates and social conditions which will encourage innovation.

The "policy-gambling" aspect of planning is different, but no less demanding. Because of environmental turbulence and "ultra-change" (that is, change in the patterns of change itself), planning must cope with much uncertainty; this includes both "hard" uncertainty, which is inherent in the processes involved and therefore cannot be reduced, and "trascendent" uncertainty, relating to the very shape of possible futures rather than merely their probabilities. Consequently, all decisions are in essence "blind gambles" to some extent, and planning is largely a policy-gambling and policy-gambling-aiding activity. This view of planning has far-reaching implications for its methods, its relations with politicians, its educational functions and its very nature.

Proposition 11:

Planning professionals need a great deal of improvement

The need for innovativeness and the view of planning as policy-gambling are but two illustrations out of many of why the skills of planning professionals must be upgraded. Despite some pioneering efforts, some of them in Latin America (e.g., the experimental programme of the Escuela de Ciencias y Técnicas de Gobierno in Caracas), the present training of planners does not prepare them adequately for their real tasks and they thus lack essential knowledge and methods. Therefore, upgrading planners' knowledge and revising the way planning professionals think (Schon, 1983) are necessary steps, as is an adjustment in the

planning expectations of the main policy-makers and relevant publics.

In the longer run, novel types of public policy and planning schools will be necessary, perhaps on a regional level. To provide urgently required knowledge and skills, however, crash-programmes are needed which will rapidly update the skills of existing professionals and provide some insights to the main policy-makers. A modular approach of intensive training based on a series of workshops interpolated with sessions of active learning may provide a solution which rapidly upgrades planners' skills in a feasible way.

Proposition 12:

A quasi-corporate approach, with the main economic and social bodies participating in the planning process, is often preferable, but central decision-making authority must be preserved

Moving on from the "capacity to govern" and related planning issues to the question of participation, the inadequacies of any "command"

approach must be recognized. Without disparaging the importance and, often, necessity of State guidance in many developing countries,

once very primitive conditions have been overcome and autonomous social and economic institutions exist, a co-operative approach involving all the main actors is essential for development planning if it is to have positive effects on reality.

Therefore, some variation of the quasi-corporate approach is recommended. Quite a number of illuminating models are to be found in France, the Netherlands, Austria, Japan, the newly industrialized nations of eastern Asia and, in a different form, some projects in the United States. The quasi-corporate structure must be fitted to the particularities of each country but, as a minimum, it should include an integrating mechanism covering the main social and econo-

mic actors on the political level, and a professional network of planning and similar units in the main social and economic organizations on the operational level.

Care must be taken, however, to ensure that the government does not fall captive to social and economic interests, which often are inertia-prone (Olsen, 1982). Reliance on market processes and corporate arrangements must be balanced by preserving and upgrading the autonomy of the State, including its planning process. This subject requires separate consideration, but should be kept in mind when various forms of "participation" and their expansion are considered.

Proposition 13:

Detailed planning and its implementation should be delegated with a view to encouraging "grass-roots" initiative and autonomy

To upgrade "participation" while also reducing overloads on central planning and assuring a better fit with local conditions, detailed planning and its implementation should be delegated to regional and local units, subject to safeguards against exaggerated "localism" and the erosion of essential central controls. The promotion of innovativeness also requires the encouragement of grass roots entrepreneurship. These principles also fit in well with and supplement a mixed market-economy development strategy, in which many functions are left to a semi-autonomous market.

To move in such directions, a number of steps must be taken which go beyond formal decisions and symbolic declarations. In particular, some of the measures required are:

- a) An actual transfer of power and resources to autonomous actors;
- b) A readiness to tolerate and even encourage risk-taking and mistakes, as long as certain limits are respected;
- c) Determined action to reduce intervention by central units, even if this entails side-stepping formal policies, so that local initiatives will not be hindered.

Implementation of such a meta-planning (i.e., planning of planning) policy is difficult, as is interestingly illustrated under the different, but still relevant, conditions of the People's Republic of China. A strong political will is essential in order to actually move in the direction of planning delegation.

Proposition 14:

Tendencies to control the market or to rely on it too much, as well as wild fluctuations between these extremes, should be avoided

Continuing along the lines of proposition 13, the need for a consistent policy on the role of the market should be underscored, especially in view

of the tendency to swing between reducing the role of the market and intervening in details, on the one hand, and eliminating needed controls,

on the other hand, as a result of various pressures, short-range considerations and panicky decision-making. Predictability and some stability are essential prerequisites of adequate market operations. This makes a consistent policy on

the roles of the market all the more necessary. Possible biases of planners towards either extreme must be counteracted, and any change in market roles should be very carefully evaluated before approval.

Proposition 15:

The implementation of major "breakthrough" projects calls for the creation of special organizations for that purpose

To balance reliance on participation and on market processes, it is necessary to bear in mind that major development projects and global strategies may require direct governmental action. Such action often cannot be left to existing bureaucratic structures, which may be quite unable to carry out innovative and large-scale development activities and projects.

Reform of public bureaucracies as a whole is at best a very slow process and often a hopeless one under real conditions. Therefore, the setting up of special organizations with a strong value-commitment to novel development policies and projects is often essential for the implementation of innovative plans. Such implementation tools should be carefully considered within the planning process itself.

Proposition 16:

Building up public identification with development strategies is a must. This involves: a) realistic visions and b) public enlightenment

In addition to semi-corporate co-operation with the main social and economic institutions, mass participation is essential for effective development. The unavoidable interim costs of the necessary "constructive destruction" make mobilization of mass support all the more essential in many Latin American and Caribbean countries.

The requirements of mass participation lead from planning into politics and point up the need for "charisma" and visionary leadership as essential factors in the success of ambitious development endeavours. This topic goes

beyond the scope of this article, but these elements should be recognized as an essential political basis for effective planning which deserve separate consideration.

Within the narrower perspectives of planning, some things can still be done: planning should provide "realistic visions" and should engage in enlightening activities directed at mobilizing broad support. The activities of the Planning Council of New Zealand provide some examples of ways in which planners can enlighten and inform the public about given policies.

Proposition 17:

Social policies constitute an essential element of planning, both as a goal and as an instrument

Social policies in the broadest sense of the term, must play a part in development planning due to at least three types of reasons:

a) In terms of values, development aims ultimately at providing a "good society" and at satisfying human individual and collective needs.

Therefore, broad social aims should serve as a guide for much of development planning.

b) "Development" depends heavily on societal factors, including possible cultural prerequisites for technological modernization (compare Wiener, 1980; Marx, 1964; Morishima, 1982). Bearing this fact in mind, it is the author's belief that a seminar should be held as soon as possible to consider such a "cultural requisite" approach to development in the Latin American and Caribbean context. The complex individual aspects of "modernity" (Inkeles, 1983) are another important factor.

c) Tactically, visible social justice and an equitable sharing of the burdens of development are essential for mobilizing support, in addition to their inherent value justification.

Additional social requirements of development include human capital production, propensities to learn and to invest, etc. Taken together, such considerations make social policy an integral and central dimension of planning for development. This, in turn, requires many changes in the professional composition and qualifications of planning units, reinforcing earlier propositions along these lines.

Proposition 18:

Political stability and the containment of social violence are essential. This returns us to the necessity of undertaking improvements in planning within a broad context of building up the capacity to govern

This last proposition returns to the starting point, i.e., putting the improvement of planning within the broad context of the capacity to govern. Unless a considerable degree of political stability is assured and social violence is contained, planning for development will be largely in vain. Therefore, when necessary, efforts should first be concentrated on increasing political stability and reducing social violence. These two factors, in turn, depend in part on successful development, as much political instability and social violence stem from economic backwardness, frustrated aspirations and subjective deprivation. There is thus a hidden snare in this situation: the improvement of political stability and containment of social violence depend on successful development, but successful develop-

ment depends, in turn, on the existence of political stability and the containment of social violence.

In situations where political instability and social violence inhibit development, their elimination should constitute primary goals for planning; efforts to achieve these objectives will, in turn, involve introducing additional dimensions and needed qualifications. Even in many Latin American and Caribbean countries where the political situation at present is stable and social violence is very limited, the spectre of the possible re-emergence of these problems should not be lost from sight and their prevention must be an important consideration in planning. This leads into important and sometimes crucial issues which warrant separate consideration.

Conclusion

It is hoped that the 18 propositions set forth above, however rudimentary, will serve the purpose of posing some of the main issues of "governability, participation and social aspects

of planning". Their presentation has been short and to the point in the interest of brevity and with a view to stimulating discussion.

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